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## Fighting Jew-Hatred

Going to bat for Jews under attack at the Voices for Truth and Humanity Remembrance Awards Dinner are Abraham Hamra, Syrian refugee and Lawyer; Ariella Noveck, prominent journalist & co-founder of BottomLine Media, and Shabbos Kestenbaum, who took down Harvard. See story pages 7-9

# Voices for Truth and Humanity's 6th Annual Remembrance Awards Dinner

All images courtesy of Barry Brown Photography

By Henry Levy

It is remarkable that in just a few short years, since its founding, an all-volunteer nonprofit, Voices for Truth and Humanity (Voices) has been the driving force for ensuring that a Holocaust curriculum is provided to all K-12 public schools in New York State, with their ultimate goal being its adoption throughout the U.S.

At this year's Remembrance Awards Dinner, held on September 9, 2025 there was an impressive line-up of honorees and powerhouse speakers, some with national and international reputations.

New York State Regent Roger Tilles unveiled an exclusive 28-page report explaining how the State will educate public school students on the Holocaust and all genocides. \$500,000 was allocated by Governor Hochul and the State Legislature for this endeavor, under the leadership of the Assembly's Education Chairman, Ed Benedetto from the Bronx, with a big assist from Tilles and Voices for Truth and Humanity. Tilles said that many experts in Holocaust education, 27 full time, provided input along with the State Education Department, with Millie Jasper of the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center in Westchester helping to coordinate the efforts. The entire report can be viewed at Voices for Truth and Humanity's website: [www.v4th.org](http://www.v4th.org).

Rick Lewis, CEO of the Mid-Island YJCC and Suffolk YJCC and founder of the Long Island Jewish Coalition, an umbrella group for all Jewish organizations on Long Island was honored with the Rabbi Mark Golub Person of the Year Award, named for the man who created JBSTV, the Jewish Broadcasting Service. Rabbi Deborah Bravo, Vice President of the New York Board of Rabbis intro-



Jack Britvan with Tony Vournou, CEO of E&A Restoration, Corporate Honoree

duced Lewis and thanked him for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Jewish community on Long Island. In his remarks Lewis mentioned he saw his task as educating and inspiring American Jews and Jews of all colors about Israel, the 48 remaining hostages, those murdered on or after October 7th, antisemitism and most importantly the horrors of the Holocaust

Ofir Akunis, the Consul General of Israel in New York and Tom DiNapoli, NYS Comptroller sent video messages extolling how critical teaching the Holocaust and factual history was for the education of our youth, and lauded Voices for being at the forefront of such efforts in our State. Akunis said, "in a world where the lies have become the truth it has never been more important than the times we are living in to ensure that the next generation is getting a proper education. Without an education our children will not know their roots and would not know the true history."

Jack Britvan, President of Voices reminded everyone that 5-6 years ago he warned about the antisemitism on college campuses, and that BDS was just another form of Jew hatred. The minds of our students were being poisoned because they were not being taught our history appropriately. He said, "Unfortunately, what is happening today, right now, around the world is like the beginning of the Holocaust. Not just the Jews, but Christians, Italians, Greeks, everybody that doesn't want to succumb to a particular way and belief."

Abraham Hamra, activist lawyer, Syrian refugee and strong supporter of Israel came ready to rock the house, and he did. In a booming voice, he told of how the parents of a boy his age in Syria, instructed their son to hit young Abraham with a rock until he bled, while chanting the popular phrase in Arabic, "Palestine is our and Jews are dogs." Complaining to authorities, but receiving no justice, his family "exited this hell known as Syria and came to America" a land of freedom, opportunity, and equality.

After the horrors of October 7th, Hamra was certain that this would wake up everyone in America, and surely students, to the truth of what Israel is facing, but he was wrong. On October 8th, there was even more antisemitism, and in every university Jews were under attack.



Consul General of Israel in New York, Ofir Akunis, address the audience via video.



NY State Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli, address the audience via video.

He knew that despite this onslaught, we still have rights, can stand tall and fight for liberty. According to Hamra, "To fight as a Jew means get married, having children, educating children as to who they are what their identity is, where they hail from and teach them who are the Jewish people. To educate children about the Torah – our tribal constitution." And he shouted, "Sue antisemites. Never back down!" He explained how he uses slander laws against Al Jazeera who told lies about him because he fights back. His final admonition was to stop speaking about Islamophobia every time you discuss antisemitism. He said that Islamophobia has shut down every idea of how the victims of Islamists have suffered. He said the biggest Trojan Horse is never hearing the history of Jews from Arab countries, about the subjugation of Jewish communities at the hands of Islamism as we are told not to speak about it. He concluded, "We need to stop



Ghazal Mizrahi and Daniel Frankel entertaining the guests with a delightful duet.



Roger Tilles, NYS board of Regents member at large, chair of committee to establish NYS's first Holocaust curriculum for all state public schools



*Ariella Noveck, MC and co-founder of BottomLine media.*

appealing the entire world when they are all against us today.”

Shabbos Kestenbaum flew all the way from California to be at the Voices event and tell his story. He said he didn’t want to dwell on the physical assault on Jewish students at Harvard Business School, or the undergrad that was spat on for wearing a kippa, or the Israeli student at Harvard who was told by his professor to leave the classroom because her nationality made others uncomfortable, or the Harvard staff members who vandalized hostage posters, showing the Bibas baby who was kidnapped and mutilated, or, be challenged to debate in an underpass about Jews orchestrating 9/11. Instead, he said that in January 2024 he filed a civil rights violation against Harvard pertaining to Jews. The judge filed a 25-page ruling saying that Harvard failed its Jewish students and tossed out two actions to dismiss the case. His became the first case in American history pertaining to civil rights violations against Jewish students on campus to actually go to trial. Kestenbaum vs. Harvard set a legal precedent which was cited by half dozen other Jewish students in cases of antisemitism on their campuses.

Adi Karni, and IDF soldier and hero, who responded on October 7th was set to return to Israel the following day to military service. He said 4-5 of his friends headed to the south during the attack and although 4 were shot, and his commander was killed, they saved lives. He said, “Every time I went into a war zone I never knew if I would return.” He spoke of little food, no showers and how tough it was to see friends getting injured. Yet, outside the war zone Israelis were working and celebrating. Adi said, “I want to stay alive to enjoy life. I smile all the time, my friends who died would want me to.” He said that after military service soldiers travel the world to have fun. His trip to New York was to visit the mother of his best friend who was killed and is buried in Rochester. His friend wasn’t even born Jewish but he

converted and loved Israel.

“I don’t know how many of you heard about starving and genocide ... nothing! Believe me, if we want to commit genocide it would happen on October 8th,” he said. Adi’s grandparents came from Yemen, Afghanistan, and Germany. When his great grandmother, a Holocaust survivor died last year at the age of 104, he was fighting and couldn’t attend her funeral.

He praised the Mossad and their brilliance, especially rigging the beepers of Hezbollah in Lebanon to explode. He repeated an Israeli joke that when the Iranians bombed the Mossad headquarters they were overjoyed but the Israelis thought it was funny because all the Mossad agents were in Iran. Adi told us to stay united. He said, “I am going back tomorrow to fight, to take over Gaza, to release the hostages. In the end we are going to win, to end this war. Nobody messes with Israel.”

For the third year Voices awarded two \$1000 prizes in its annual Sam and Martin Bloch Essay Contest open to rising high school seniors. The contest asks students to explain what they have learned about the Holocaust and how its lessons may still be applicable in today’s society, citing examples from their own lives. This year the winners were Hannah Bloom and Molly Deblinger, both from Dix Hills, NY. Three Honorable Mentions were awarded to Bella Marino of Roslyn, NY, Nazmun Bhuiyan of Hudson, NY and Jessica Galynkin of Brooklyn, NY

Names Not Numbers Students at the Suffolk YJCC were honored with the Tik-kun Olam Award and recognized for their participation in this interactive, multi-media Holocaust film documentary project. Winners included Jenna Atlas, Adin Bart, Sarah Bloom, Molly Deblinger, Layla Derzie, Oliver Donnelly, Hailey Drobner, Julia Ehlers, Dylan Gordon, Ali Levinson, Daniel Morganstern, Eli Noah, Jake Seilback, Addison Sukoff, Cassie Terrana, Jamie Weiss, Sophie Wolfman, and Liza Zelkin. Ariella Noveck not only performed superbly in the role of MC for the evening, but is an exceedingly well-known journalist and social media star. She is the founder

of BottomLine media, the only nonprofit working to systematically equip journalists with the tools, training and truth they need to report on Israel and the region (Bottom-LineMedia.org).

Entertainment was provided by two extraordinary singers. Daniel Frankel, a Cantorial soloist sang the Star-Spangled Banner and Hatikvah in a powerful voice that reverberated throughout the room. He then teamed up with the beautiful and talented Ghazal Mizrahi, singer-songwriter and Iranian-Persian performer for an operatic duet that was stunning.

Jack Britvan wrapped up the evening detailing Voices for Truth and Humanity’s plans for 2026.

He noted that Voices is an all-volunteer organization with a 12-person board whose sole focus is getting the job done. In that vein, he encouraged any and every other major organization to join with Voices, and to even take over projects if they will devote the time, staff, and money to do it properly. He explained that, “We do not need photo ops, just results.”

Here are Voices plans going forward: There are now 17-18 States with Holocaust Commissions or Task Forces which means they likely have a Holocaust curriculum. Voices wants to provide access to all 50 states. Britvan spoke with the NJ Holocaust Commission, which has the most extensive Holocaust curriculum in the US and Stockton University about partnering to create the first 3-4 day Summit for all 17-18 States to create a guideline of best practices for a Holocaust curriculum and to teach the Holocaust. Voices will invite the Governors of NY, NJ and PA to speak, then share guidelines with the other 32 Governors. Any organization with a curriculum



*Jack Britvan, President of Voices, honoree Rick Lewis and Angel Cepeda, Treasurer of Voices.*



Bill Tinglin, CEO, Tour For Tolerance; essay contest judges Glen Landow, Andrea Bolender, Mark Meirowitz, essay content winners Hannah Bloom and Molly Deblinger and Assemblyman Steve Stern.

will be invited to join the initiative, discuss funding of Commissions & Task Forces and metrics to monitor the implementation.

There are 32 Jewish owners of major league sports teams. Voices reached out to ask that they set aside one home game as a Holocaust Remembrance Night to educate fans and players alike. Fans. People and organizations with contacts to these team owners are requested to help Voices bring this to fruition.

Voices has a commitment from a major forum on Long Island to show Schindler's List and invite high schools to have their students attend since most people under the age of 30 have likely never seen the film. A Holocaust survivor and an historian will speak immediately after. Voices invites anyone with contacts at major venues or movie chains to assist in this effort at Holocaust Remembrance Week in movie theaters.

Voices is seeking to produce a 20-minute Virtual Reality experience about the Holocaust for high school students that places them on the streets during Kristallnacht, in homes of Jews being taken away, riding in cattle cars, and arriving at a concentration camp with barking dogs and SS soldiers to experience the fear, horror, and hopelessness. It is anticipated that this will cost \$5-\$7 million to produce. Voices is requesting help reaching a willing producer and director, as well as outreach to funding sources.

Britvan said that if people do not get involved in educating our youth now, in 20-30 years we may find ourselves forced to wear something we don't want, women's rights may be gone, pride community – gone, Jewish community – gone, America – gone.

He said, "The time to stand up and be heard is now, or never."

To get involved with Voices and learn more visit their website: [www.v4th.org](http://www.v4th.org). ☆



IDF soldier Adi Karni, Syrian refugee, activist and attorney Abraham Hamra, and the man who sued Harvard and set a legal precedent to protect Jewish students at universities, Shabbos Kestenbaum. These three amigos go to bat for the rights, safety and security of the Jewish people, and Voices for Truth and Humanity was proud to honor them and have them as powerhouse speakers at their Remembrance Awards Dinner.



# VOICES FOR TRUTH AND HUMANITY

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Remembrance Awards Dinner

### Tuesday, September 9, 2025

Crest Hollow Country Club • 8325 Jericho Turnpike, Woodbury, NY 11797



Awardees from Names, Not Numbers and Essay Contest with Glen Landow and Assemblyman Steve Stern on left and Jane Pashman, Director of Names, Not Numbers at the Suffolk Y JCC.



Honoree Rick Lewis, recipient of of Rabbi Mark Golub Person of the Year Award, Andrea Bolender, Voices Board Member, Mazi Pilip, Nassau County legislator, Susanne Seperson, EASAPP, and another Voices supporter.



Recipients of the Voices Good Guy Award, Nicole Leventhal-Malkin and her daughter Paige Cornicelli of BottleBuys in Glen Head who engraved the wine bottle keepsakes with special messaging to Never Forget the Holocaust.



The Color Guard from the Jewish War Veterans with Commander of Post 652 Gary Glick center (Voices Board Member), Mazi Pilip and Rabbi Jay Rosenbaum, who gave the Invocation (second from right).



Rick Lewis



Ariella Noveck



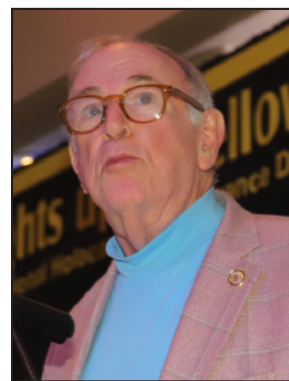
IDF soldier Adi Karni



Abraham Hamra



Shabbos Kestenbaum



Roger Tilles